

Workingmen's Houses,
Michael Sullivan House
383 South Locust Street
Dubuque
Dubuque County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-159-N

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
14-N-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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Site Location: 383 South Locust Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 2.1-2
Cadastral grid: SE1/4 SE1/4 S25 T89N R2E
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
UTM coordinates: 15.691990.4706240
Lot dimensions: 27'x 100': .06 acre
18'x 50': .02 acre

Present Owner: Iowa Department of Transportation

Present Usage: vacant

Present Condition: poor / fair

Significance: Built in 1881 by laborer Michael Sullivan, this two-story frame house is the most architecturally sophisticated and least altered of several similarly scaled and configured workingmen's dwellings built along this section of Southern Avenue (now South Locust Street) at the south periphery of Dubuque in the 1870s and 1880s. Although neither Sullivan nor subsequent owner William Holmberg appear to have played formative roles in Dubuque's history, the property is noteworthy for its exceptional continuity of ownership. While nearby houses passed through numerous hands, this building housed only two families for almost one hundred years from its construction in 1881 until 1975.

Part I. Historical Information

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

1. **Construction Date:** 1881
2. **Architect/Builder:** unknown
3. **Original and Subsequent Owners:** The Michael Sullivan House is sited on a tract of land legally described as Lots 11 and 12 and South 18' of Lot 10 of Levi's Addition to the City of Dubuque. The following references are taken from the abstract for the property, presently held by the Iowa Department of Transportation, Ames, Iowa.

1876 Warranty Deed, 22 September 1876; Recorded on 18 October 1881 in Book 33TL, page 113.
Alexander Levi and wife, Minette Levi, to Bridget Burke.
[consideration: \$100.00 for south 10' of Lot 10 and the north 15' of Lot 11 of Levi's Addition.]

- 1881 Warranty Deed, 28 April 1881; Recorded on 27 December 1881 in Book 33TL, page 259.
Alexander Levi and wife, Minette Levi, to Michael Sullivan.
[consideration: \$100.00 for south 10' of Lot 11 and north 20' of Lot 12 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1884 Warranty Deed, 10 March 1884; Recorded on 16 May 1887 in Book 40TL, page 443.
Alexander Levi and wife, Minette Levi, to Michael Sullivan.
[consideration: \$40.00 for south 7' of Lot 12 and north 17' of Lot 13 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1901 Warranty Deed, 22 October 1901; Recorded on 21 November 1901 in Book 62TL, page 247.
Michael Sullivan to wife, Mary Sullivan.
[consideration: love and affection for south 19' of Lot 16, north 17' of Lot 7, south 12' of Lot 11 and Lots 12 and 13 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1912 Warranty Deed, 9 November 1912; Recorded on 29 January 1925 in Book 95TL, page 186.
Bridget Burke, widow, to daughter, Mary A. Burke.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other valuable considerations for south 12' of Lot 10 and north 15' of Lot 11 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1914 Warranty Deed, 28 August 1914; Recorded on 31 August 1914 in Book 79TL, page 27.
Bridget Burke, widow, to Mary Sullivan.
[consideration: \$1.00. "Whereas errors have occurred in locating lines between Lots 9, 10 and 11, City of Dubuque, and in the location of buildings upon parts of said lots by former owners thereof, and, whereas for the purpose of correcting such errors and avoiding future dispute as to the title to and lines of said lots, mutual conveyances have agreed to be made between the parties in interest in said lots, according to a plat of Lot 9 and the north 15 feet of Lot 10, and the south 12 feet of Lot 10 in Levi's Addition to the City of Dubuque, as shown by the recorded plats in Dubuque County. Therefore, sell and convey unto said Mary Sullivan, the following described premises situated in the City of Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa, to wit: Lot 2 of the subdivision of the subdivision of the south 12 feet of Lot 10 according to said plat. Also the north 15 feet more or less of Lot 11 in Levi's Addition to the City of Dubuque, according to the recorded plat of said Addition."]

- 1914 Warranty Deed, 28 August 1914; Recorded on 2 September in Book 80TL, page 99.
Mary Sullivan to William J. Holmberg and wife, Mary.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration for Lots 11, 12 and 13, Lot 2 of subdivision of north 15' of Lot 10, and Lot 2 of subdivision of south 12' of Lot 10 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1936 Quit Claim Deed, 22 February 1936; Recorded on 26 February 1936 in Book 104TL, page 636.
Mary A. Burke, widow, to William J. Holmberg and wife, Mary
[consideration: \$1.00 for Lot 2 of South 12' of Lot 10 and north 15' of Lot 11 of Levi's Addition.]
- 1975 Court Officer Deed, 1 November 1975; Recorded on 17 November 1975 in Instrument #8637-75.
John B. Holmberg and Helen Holmberg Willis, executors, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$14,500.00.]
- 1975 Warranty Deed, 5 November 1975; Recorded on 21 November 1975 in Instrument #8832-75.
William R. Holmberg and wife, Joyce Holmberg, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration.]
- 1975 Warranty Deed, 6 November 1975; Recorded on 21 November 1975 in Instrument #8833-75.
Helen M. Holmberg Willis and husband, Eugene F. Willis, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration.]
- 1975 Warranty Deed, 1 November 1975; Recorded on 21 November 1975 in Instrument #8834-75.
Rita E. Holmberg, unmarried, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration.]
- 1975 Warranty Deed, 1 November 1975; Recorded on 21 November 1975 in Instrument #8835-75.
John M. Holmberg and wife, Lucille Holmberg, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration.]

- 1975 Warranty Deed, 8 November 1975; Recorded on 21 November 1975 in Instrument #8836-75.
Mary M. Holmberg and husband, Christopher J. Walsh, to John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns.
[consideration: \$1.00 and other good and valuable consideration.]
- 1977 Warranty Deed, 31 October 1977; Recorded on 2 November 1977 in Instrument #11827-1977.
John M. Burns and wife, Donna M. Burns, to International Management and Investment Corporation.
[consideration: \$1.00, etc.]
- 1983 Warranty Deed, 7 February 1983.
International Management and Investment Corporation to State of Iowa.
[consideration: unknown.]

4. Original Plans, Construction: The Michael Sullivan House has changed little since its construction. A relatively modest two-story frame building, it is massed using a vernacular I-house configuration, with Victorian detailing.
5. Alterations and Additions: The most significant alteration to the building is the construction of a single-story side addition sometime between 1891 and 1909. This increased the structure's footprint by 64 percent and its square footage by 32 percent. The only other exterior alterations of note are the sheathing of the roof with asphalt shingles, date unknown, and the replacement of the deck and ceiling planks on the side porch in 1977. The interior finishes have been altered somewhat, but the interior organization remains essentially intact.

B. HISTORICAL PERSONS AND EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOUSE

In May 1873 Dubuque real estate developer Alexander Levi divided a portion of Mineral Lot 50 to form a residential subdivision along Southern Avenue (now South Locust Street). Called Levi's Addition, this small development consisted of 13 equal-sized, parallelogramatic lots on the west side of the street. In April 1881 Levi sold portions of Lots 11 and 12 to Michael Sullivan for \$100. Later that year Sullivan built a two-story frame house on the land. A laborer, he lived here with his wife, Mary, until selling the property in 1914 to William J. Holmberg and his wife, also named Mary. The Holmbergs occupied the house over the next

sixty years, reportedly manufacturing horseradish in the small storefront building immediately south. Mary died in April 1972, and William in June 1975; their heirs then sold the property. In 1983 the Iowa Department of Transportation acquired the house and outbuildings and plans to demolish them for construction of a proposed highway. Neither Sullivan nor Holmberg appears to have played a formative role in Dubuque development.

C. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.

Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1879, 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.

Dubuque County Assessment Record: 3-24-2-17A&18.

Iowa Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Cultural Resources Assessment."

Land Title Abstract (located at Iowa Department of Transportation, Ames Iowa).

Dubuque Daily Herald: 4 December 1881.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

1. **Architectural Character:** The Michael Sullivan House is a typical example of the two-story, side-gabled houses built along Southern Avenue in the 1870s and 1880s by Dubuque's working class.
2. **Condition of Fabric:** poor / fair.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

1. **Overall Dimensions:** 2-story main block: 16'4"x 28'5"; 1-story side addition: 14'4"x 16'10"; front porch: 5'6"x 14'3"; side porch: 6'2"x 16'3".
2. **Foundations:** stone rubble perimeter walls.
3. **Ext. Walls :** narrow exposure, painted wood beveled siding.

4. **Roofs:** steeply pitched side gables over main block and side addition, both with interlocking tab asphalt shingles; shallow hip over front porch, sheathed with soldered metal plates; shed extension of side addition gable over side porch, sheathed with asphalt roll roofing. All roofs have plain-board boxed cornices.
5. **Chimneys:** one interior, centrally placed brick chimney, straddle-roof, on main block; one gable-end brick chimney on south end of side addition.
6. **Dormers:** none.
7. **Windows:** 2/2 double hung wood sash throughout; molded drip caps on main first floor, main block and plain casings elsewhere; lug sills.
8. **Openings:** one centrally placed, single-leaf front door on main block; door is decoratively detailed with turned pilasters, single light and carved panel, and has a single-light transom over; simpler single-leaf door on front of side addition.
9. **Porches:** hipped roof, single-story wooden front porch centered on main block; porch has three turned posts and two matching engaged columns; decorative barge board includes fret-work, brackets, spindles and molded dentils; beveled siding on apron. Full width shed roof over semi-enclosed side porch, also with narrow-exposure beveled siding composing the closed railing; four fixed 2-light windows and decorative barge board with molded cornice and scroll-sawn brackets. Both front and side porches have painted wood lattice work around the crawl spaces.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

1. **Floor plan:** The Michael Sullivan House is laid out using a traditional I-house configuration, with a living room and sitting room in the first floor of the original section and a kitchen / dining room in the south addition. A straight-flight stair ascends the west wall of the living room to the second floor. The upper level houses two bedrooms, separated by a central hallway, with a bathroom situated in the northwest corner.
2. **Interior finishes:** The building features typical interior finishes, primarily wood strip flooring and wallpaper (either subsequently painted or uncoated) placed over lath-and-plaster.

The sitting room features painted paper on the walls with original Victorian casings and corner blocks around the windows and a 10-1/2" compound molded baseboard. Carpet has been applied over the vinyl which covers the wood strip flooring, and the original plaster ceiling has been covered by Celotex acoustical panels. The living room walls consist of painted plaster with a 36" high fluted wainscot with molded top rail. The floor in this room is covered with carpet and the ceiling plaster coated with orange-peel texture. The plaster walls of the kitchen/dining room are covered with Celotex panels, with a 36" stained pine wainscot, the floors carpeted and the ceiling textured plaster. The second-floor bedrooms feature painted papered walls and ceilings, vinyl over wood strip flooring and plain board casings and baseboards.

C. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The Michael Sullivan House is situated in a row of similarly scaled and configured dwellings along South Locust Street at the southern periphery of Dubuque. All of the houses share similar setbacks and entry treatments from the common sidewalk. A single privy is located behind the house and an associated gable-roofed storefront building aligns the sidewalk immediately to the south.

Compiler: Clayton B. Fraser, Fraserdesign, Loveland Colorado.
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